

# *Knapp introduces fiscal responsibility*

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Montgomery County Council members will be better able to identify the cost of legislation before voting it into the budget with the help of a new bill introduced last week, Councilman Mike Knapp (D.-Dist. 2) said.

Under Knapp's bill, the county code would be changed so that the County Executive's Office would be required to include fiscal notes with accompanying bills to illuminate exactly what the financial "bottom line" of the legislation. It would also mandate that the County Executive's Office and council adhere to a standard language in writing those fiscal notes.

According to a recent report from the county's Office of Legislative Oversight, fiscal notes do not follow any rules and can vary greatly in detail.

As an example of why the bill is needed, Knapp cited the recent dispute between the council and County Executive Isiah "Ike" Leggett (D) over his plan to give county workers compensatory leave without the council's approval. Because of no clear language standards, there was confusion over how much the paid leave time would cost and the council created tension between Leggett and the council. "The law needs to be changed to ensure this doesn't happen again, and I think the council should look at other alternatives as well in the fall," said Councilman Phil Andrews (D-Dist. 3). "We need to make sure this situation doesn't happen in the future."

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Knapp's bill would place a requirement for fiscal notes from a little-known 25-year-old document, the Montgomery County Plain Language Drafting Manual in the county code. The public hearing on the bill is scheduled for Sept. 21.

"This is going to help the county make better decisions," Knapp said at the introduction last week; however, Leggett's spokesman Patrick Lacefield doesn't agree.